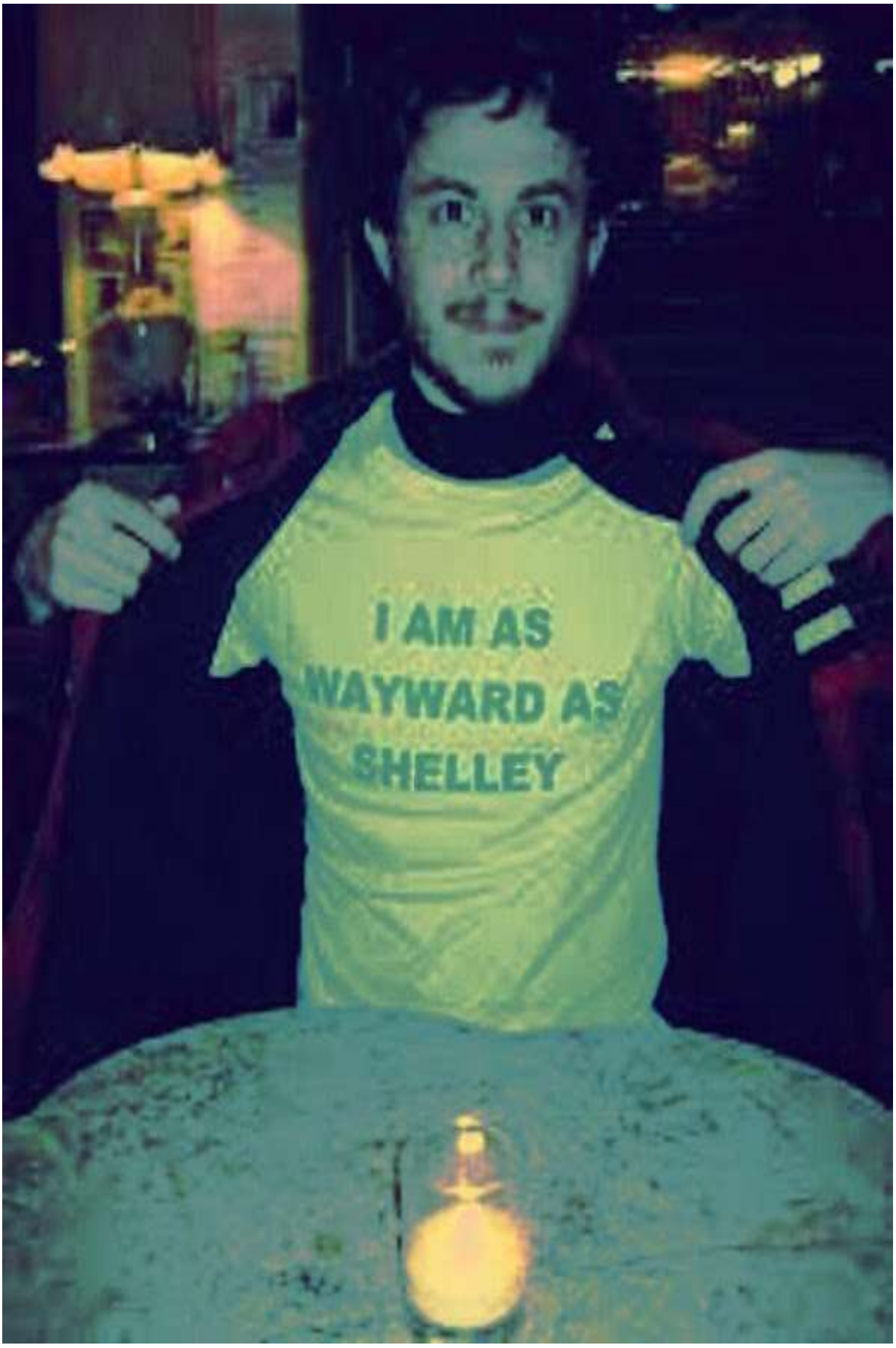
I AM AS
WAYWARD AS
SHELLEY

Beams

Adam Fieled

Cover photograph by Amy King
East Village, Manhattan, NY, 2005
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Preface

As I have discussed at length elsewhere, 2005 was a hectic, tumultuous time for me. On a bunch of different circuits (including the Philly bar scene and the art scene, which in the Aughts were first cousins), the Philly Free School was a fire set loose. My writing life wasn't (couldn't be) terribly disciplined at the time— though I had written *Wittgenstein's Song* in April at the Last Drop, and debuted it in New England. My spring M.F.A. semester was nonetheless a personal milestone; through Anne Waldman, I immersed myself in nouveau poetry and the avant-garde; and my piece (written for Anne) *Wordsworth @ McDonald's* came out in Jacket #28 in April, too. Being younger than thirty and in Jacket Magazine was part of my wild ride then. I felt cocky, and puckish. The explosiveness of Poetry Incarnation '05 aided and abetted this. It was a bludgeoning forward kind of time.

It was in character for me in 2005 to believe I could create a valuable poetic form out of thin air. In truth, the eponymous section of *Beams* I wrote at that time is not a substantial formal breakthrough that much; what I call the "Beam" form isn't that unique or striking. The poems have more strength in their thematic gist than in their formal inventiveness— lots of twisted, warped sexuality, precursor to the *When You Bit…* sonnets and the *Madame Psychosis* poems, written a year later. It wasn't a stretch for me to be warped about sexuality in mid-Aughts Philadelphia, or New York, where Mike Land's sister Anna lived in the East Village. The *Madame Psychosis* poems of '06 were formally and thematically more self-conscious; partly because I was trying to be painterly (in the manner of de Kooning and his *Women*), partly because the formal imperative was to compress (in the manner of Keats), partly because I'd been perverted and slightly deranged by a period of promiscuity, and knew it. Many of the best *Madame Psychosis* poems were written in New England; *debbie jaffe* was written in Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia. *Becky Grace* constitutes significant early recognition of Rebecca Hilliker. I lifted the title of the series from Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, which I read at that time, and which was animated by a similar twistedness. Nick Gruberg, who bled literary twistedness, encouraged me in this respect.

One of my odd discoveries then was that a huge puritanical streak ran through avant-garde poetry in America. One female editor, in particular, castigated my pervishness in a memorable way, by laying down a gauntlet—if she was going to publish me, it had to be something more abstract or impressionistic, and not so sexualized. I wrote the original *Apparition Poems* (which later mutated in a more expansive direction) for her—some of them wound up coming out, also, in Jacket #31, and in a Lake Forest College Press anthology. As *Beams* was being written, my life tightened and became more focused— I finished my M.F.A., started as a University Fellow at Temple, and the Free School ceased to function as a cohesive entity. The *Virtual Pinball* poems, co-written with Swedish poet Lars Palm, were a kind of last hurrah for the profligate Free School period—written in an arbitrary, haphazard manner, often from whatever I happened to be listening to on the radio. By October '06, I had compiled the *Beams* manuscript of the four series and sent it to Blazevox. It came out as a Blazevox e-book a year later, and was not ignored.

Beams is as close as I've come to publishing something representatively post-modern— a book which prizes quirk, anomaly, and disjuncture over depth and intellect. If

I had to move past it instantly, it is because I found the strictures of post-modern verse too limiting. There's too much human reality which can't be expressed with quirk and anomaly; and too much ephemerality in the post-modern approach for a disciple of both British Romanticism and Deconstructionism to accept or embrace (even if UK poet/editor Jeffrey Side connected *Beams* with Blake in his '08 GR review of the book). If *Beams* has a claim to some enduring importance, it is because I dared to tackle a serious theme (human sexuality) in a few novel, head-splitting ways (multiple, multiplying significations), and without unduly obfuscating what the theme was.

Adam Fieled, 2013-2026

Publication Credits

& Now Awards Anthology (Lake Forest College Press)— "Apparition Poems"

The Argotist— "café"

Blazevox— "Call", "Legs", "Loose Canon"

Cricket Online Review— "Sarah Israel"

Dusie— "Apparition Poems"

Eratio Postmodern Poetry— "Helen Lee"

Jacket Magazine— "Apparition Poems"

Mipoesias— "this is a song (about how I'm a monkey"), "isla perdida", "virtual pinball"

Nth Position— "debbie jaffe"

Ocho #6— "creep"

Otoliths— "Apparition Poems"

PennSound— "Becky Grace," "Hell In," "Solipsist"

Words Dance— "sex hex", "solipsist"

A print edition of *Beams* was published by Human Touch (Miami, Florida), in 2012.

I. BEAMS

creep

i'm inclined to play creep w/ a bagel

off-white dough gets kneaded
black-shirted blue-jeaned green-horns

indented floors absorb sponge-light
looks for line-riches, coffee-crucial cafés

leg strokes render you from his palm
in paisley like an Oregon farmer

ploughs couldn't be more shared
as you leave me, hardly, knock-kneed

razor

what perspective I have is slanted

edged like needle-scars along arm-veins
everything I can't puncture is there

now "surprise" means you come back
pointed to a blade, I call you razor

as if fingers could untwine fish-eyes
nails take off layers of anodyne

bottoms grow hardened from rubs
& sharpness be a baby's candy

Sex hex

If she's skittish, don't skip her

you might just be a ball of yarn
unraveled beneath her nails

or a bagged mind-fuck
leaving her careening, ecstatic

nothing wrong w/ a little push

take her up, stroke her belly
she'll think of Foucault

& possibly let you construct her

solipsist

are you serious, fucking

bent over bars, malt heavens
bubbles bumping bed-posts, breakage

sweating mug, street-lake sea-shells
last night around yr waist

you're knotted, not what you did
pressed to the city's dry ice

deep down the throat of a solipsist

café

napkin-neat café decomposition

poster-plastered walls represent fresh being
repetitious modes of sensual self-sacrifice

not recoverable by any stub-cottony means
lightning track-lighting long-swallow lit-smoke

my grey-guts spattered on a table

unstructured strength it could be, cherry-red cowardice
parallel shadows unplaced by any given

finally flight is taken from time's impossibility
for solid substance, death's lettuce-deluge

self-naming can't be where this winds up

Leaves

Leaves tonight are leaning
spots of light inside inside-ness

then when you pause a moment
wade in Poseidon's fountain

cherish the night's totality
leaves become ground

for christening

Infinite Regress

Modigliani-marvelous
you collapsed perspectives

"vessel" in torso-line, reflected
back, over your shoulder

you leapt from the frame
colors in you remained canvas

fore-grounded dimensions

Silk

if I could fashion a fashion from fashion

your fabric fluttered over my chest
styled slacks pressed the length of Chelsea

shapely shadows arrayed over cheekbones
shutters would close on our revelations

hair askew, damp in rouge-red blood-flow

a fashion past the lips of limitation
defined not to distinguish or over-vogue

but to green silk that had been dusky
and to tease out each stark blue

behind eye-lined, sky-lined walls of rigidity

Loose Canon

shots ricocheted at borders

coated walls absorbed friction-lit brigades
sensitive machines registered red hits

sleep fell on specifics regardless
universals fried sausages

not much could be spoken of remorse

second skirmish sent forces scattering
shards of green glass littered forest floors

irreplaceable antiques wiped their eyes
on the cuffs of the loosest canon

I didn't expect immolation to arrive so soon

Legs

senseless propositions

seem ruddy-cheeked in sky-backed night
exhaust-fume dense from windowless space

you're black-hewn then, from spider-webbed heat
(rubbed, boned over propulsions)

clouded lights prove unstable, shoot themselves off
damp felt ends of feeling….

a state of affairs untouched by contraction
simulacrum of finite regression

puddles and spoon-handles confuse themselves

emmie

dreams are irrevocably dreamt

much “noticing” goes on
& metaphors are like similes

you remain gravy-wakeful
I remain carving this air-turkey

“too cornered”, street between

slipper-shod graces, facts;
uncles, ex-cranberries;

i can’t carve a relation

ex

mimesis of no-détente

(m)oral play of difference
I follow breath to be

as a blue painted vase
El Greco-sepia room

crossed corrugated lips

regrets of rinsed locusts
you "just knew" this

would happen, as you

"just knew" it'd happen
when you painted me

Whiskey

Balance, easily sought, is hardly attained;
no sooner are we aloft than we're

buried beneath snow-drifts; grace follows damn-
nation, damnation follows grace, & whiskey

soaked evenings are always a possibility.
In fact, it's here that Li Po forged

whatever stealth was his, in the first buzz
of drunkenness. I follow him, rattled, jarred,

& stymied by the world's cries, & my own,
& soon I sit amid piles on both sides—

exultations, horrors, amassed like so many
stamps, low-priced, out of date.

Drip

I've received, refused one invitation into Middle America.
Her body was a cornfield, that's true. Everything in it

was ripe. She engraved the invitation on my bed,
mixed it into my drinks, taped it on the fridge.

It hovered between us like a mist, soon grew monstrous.
Shit or get off the pot, she said. *Get while the getting's*

good. I was lost in the green rows of her skin. I was
afraid of the Middle, it's ice-creamy easiness. It dripped.

By autumn, I blew it. The harvest moon shone on stubs.
The pissed Middle swore to evade me forever. I don't miss it.

Blog

every post you post is posted post-haste

succor-seeking cocks in your hand and mouth
seminal urges baffle you like nitrous

chin-dribble takes back-space from your keyboard
one hand pumps page-down, one inserts

shift mixes drivel and nut-sack sweat

I take tabs, control, alter, delete,
sans cock-lock, escape-ready, home-truth entered

your print inscribes epithets on my X-key
at an outpost, post-modernity betrayed

by your complete lack of question marks

Pay

Summer's leaving, it's plague time.
Penny-parted cogs scrape, blare, cut & swear.

Voices stay wall-stuck, slashed between
poppy-dog chains. I've got purple before me.

It's like a hunger-chiseled face. I pay
& pay; smoked heads flung into grimace,

I'm grimaced beneath smoke, oven-churned.
She's cigarettes, restless, side-walked.

Excess weight pinches finely-nerved necks;
mauve sky's a bared torso, an "if";

I could chunder, that's certain.

ladder

stepped leaning ladders perched

like an easy-won confession
"lover" is harder than it is easy

you of all people know this
paleness deployed in guerrilla

lipstick attacks, Princess Leia

bangs coming down rungs
don't walk under the trestles

I climb sideways into paint-cans

II. APPARITION POEMS

#3

petals on a

bed you made,

against

ocean's breakers

#27

not across, not down
emptied, always grey
such is this stuff

such is a hat's convalescence

#14

through a door
genuine article
three geezers
many nods

pink Buddha

#23

how sky, clods in it,
seems a near-melt,
a blue-grey omelette;

traipsing brick surfaces

#17

three red flags, each winnowed
around multi-colored stones,
is how I've been hit,

how I've been gutted

#19

stick to

her blackness,

you'll find

moving stripes

#42

feet tap linoleum,
shadow-play rhythm;
not to be dogged,
nerves infra-reddened

#45

"in order to"
lose those blueberry shackles
"fight hegemony"
in moose-like context

I don't know how to

#36

after all
everything
you're still
thinking

ochre-tinted

#61

never you worry
honey
on the table
money

#80

I rev clean across
I'm paved
I'm rolling in moss
I save

#87

windows up

        higher

look through

        into great wide opus

#89

o it's drab
outside the trees

really only me
I see there

#91

"I have
eaten no
plums"
is what
I told
the trope-
police

#85

not to be mistaken
not to be messed with
not to be forsaken

only to be blessed with

how it must be on Jupiter

#75

sun is there
not here

anyway
the bed's made

#70

here, look,
coffee in a cup
wouldn't you
just know
I creamed it?

#50

she
seems
to be

up

at me

#52

conflate
  two leaves
two ideas
  with veins

don't bark

#54

off, into rivers
currently
where you be

#100

art in "say"
art in "do"

art

pass the ketchup

#105

cut short,
pumpkin,
but that's
alright, as
I feel cut
also, by
short kin,
smashed.

#150

last September cricket
leaf falls on him

#162

no room for thought
glare on potted plants

flawlessly dumbstruck

#163

your face
beige wall
it's pictured

not that I
can reach

#168

maybe I'll
get broken
in Hoboken

I'm joking

#169

you'll see
it's urban
as grease,

breaths I

take in a
rush like
this, this

#170

éclairs conspire
all in a line

I'm hungry

for them to
be written

#195

ordinary hull

of a tight wad
ship
shop
stop

#200

my hands measure
hyena arousal
as my mouth laughs

my my

#201

“a dream of form
in days of thought”

the thought formed
& it was a dream

#203

Who watches as antlers
convolute themselves?
O dear

#131

she in blue
out the door

cross

in the street
red light

#132

at this time
you’re there
but you won’t

remain, can't

after all, it's
dear, staying

#136

Pollock's rhythm

took him up
maybe too far

as to where we are

#137

to walk

    is expressive

of having legs

    ad infinitum

#120

unlikely thighs
put upon a page
white, long, lined
can't complain

#121

what do I know
what does "last" mean
"last" is not "lost"
purple frame, clear door.

#124

when a head tilts
round eyes, snap

III. MADAME PSYCHOSIS

Sarah Israel

Memory wears white tee-shirts, is blue-eyed,
that I "remember" her.
This new kind of "I" passes fourth-grade notes,
says "I like you" to her.
It trailed off in her swimming pool.
She was so spiteful.
That "I" remember "her" is a kind of joke,
but we did dance at Bar Mitzvahs.
And some of them were slow.
And some ended in other things.
Call this an aesthetic of Tantalus.
Tantalus was overeager in English class;
a "he" in "she" seen by me.
I heard of her exploits later.
"She's so totally after him."
"You don't have to strip to tease".
I saw her in a seeing not seen by any eye,
& the "I" that saw, saw my eye not at all.

helen lee

you said (it was a way of saying)
hold me, touch, kiss. vagaries of
bliss, explosive, like, lemons. like
"like". reach behind, "blind". i'm,
progressing, make. miner, key,
brooding. expressive of the sole's
rubber. only a lamp through wind
clarities. (not a, not, a, formula).

changing lit's lace. how fetching,
fowl. red, buttons, noticed, before,
she, came. not tender, tenderly
rendered, heart-rending lee "deus
ex machine-esque"— "like glory"

Dawn Ananda

clambers to clutch things in a snake-like grip;
model-trim belly, w/ just the vaguest fat-hint
towards hip-ends, is often bared in dancing;

hair, italian brunette, irish straight, gets caught
in her mouth when a harsh caress tenses her;
ass, perfect median meager-voluptuous, will

raise itself when she chooses a favorite CD;
neck, african-elongated, porcelain-pure, frightens
in the extreme refinement of its' delicacy;

legs, edible swizzle-sticks & gazelle-gorgeous,
become erratic after three or four drinks;
tongue, volatile entity-in-itself, is bellwether

of nothing whatsoever but what the strokes are up to

lizzie mclean

was all pot roast. hope:
that I can't hold, doll.
for you write, wrong. big.
bold. ass, a nine-volt shite.
"boners were tulips", yes,
butt, I never, have never,
buttered heads, as such,
w/ you. it's all weary
simper. I, conned, take,
your, "can't".

paula

chaos, order, clipped bird-like into
wings & cries. i could only ever
think: paula. all the thrusts &
pumps that could never be. "all"
that must be withheld, & that
it might be better that way.

you gave me the gift: savoring
wanting. how it really was you
i wanted. not a body but a soul.
i tell myself i've "been through
you", forever & never. zero here,
same as two. empty. saturated. dark.

eye eye eye

nile-wide, eye eye eye.
a sylph, bee low my buzz.
it wants, to do, at mouth.
no. not every one. can end,
dare-a-licked, like is. or:
put it, porn again. dew wit
like its done, on, cyber.
space, opened, bee twain. no,
went in sight. tight tight.

debbie jaffe

& that i must caesar. arms, curd
went down. found, mice, shelf, armor
machine. wasp it up, & up, & up, real
member a machine. then, head, shot,
“she said”, she said. feel, linger, can’t.
belly, caesar, belly. debit, giraffe, red-
headed. purge to null, urge, two, pull.
eye, belly, belie. ( )

lucy stingle

yr back's back in back. black.
fingers ride cheeks like sea-foam.
soft cut of a hard look. tow-
headed horse's ass pony-tail.
rather a strong black-strapped sit.
quick tongue-dart like plane's
blinking beacon. now I'm "back",
or you're fronting. easy trick. Rote
gimmick. gerund: "gallivanting".
meaning: to parade, wantonly.
I'll, we'll, give it "back". easy. still black.

Debra Harnigan

Noting/ cheekbone sluice/ china veneer
Impulses/ bathroom stalls/ naughtiness
I'm in on it/ gentle as anesthesia/ drops
Disrupt/ retrograde attitude/ mercurial
Your middle/ leaned up/ lifting belly
Your bottom/ budging metal/ melting
In-drip/ innards ingrown/ warm war

& then the how the went the into the flush

Becky Grace

It's woven into her, that polo
shirt. She might even fuck w/ it.
Not "we", post-we or sub-we, but
just "pseudo", "quasi", "ersatz".
Nothing w/ "self" in it; nothing
implying discrete boundaries.
Becky isn't bounded, or has
boundlessness woven into her…

Polo shirts are what they are,
remain so. If I say "objective
correlative", I bring string into it,
so that Becky might be
strung up. I don't deny a "literal"
element, or that Becky might stay in.
All I mean is, between "us", there's
"more-than-us". That's what I'm
"getting at"; it's woven into me

IV. VIRTUAL PINBALL (with Lars Palm)

Isla Perdida (Lars, w/ Adam)

somewhere between summer &
eternity anesthesiologists
wonder, where, the whitewash, went.
There is certainly need enough
for that, they further, muse. In
wee hours of morning he claims to
speak seven languages; says one of the
municipal buses, runs, to a place called

isla perdida which may be where the
horror writers sit & type all day or
maybe in some, instances (insomniac
anyone?), night-watched.
& somewhere between lairs of
the liars that be, a little, while, longer

un-blown (now go & sin) (Lars, w/ Adam)

a popular poplar parties
w/ pre-menstrual princesses—
that's blues for you.
i shall over-churn that cop car.
though, i'm, no occupational. or force,
just a kid, with, shorts, & a
slingshot. there's lost. of fun
to be had w/ one of toes. god
nose, hose down those
who got bruised, by, the news.

or those used cars w/ broken brakes
so poplar among third-rate
pop-shears for reasons, un-blown.
by the application of solid air-ity
banks to issue interest-free
loans to make it easier to start
businesses in, precarious, areas.
or a tuna sandwich,
which is what he needs before
he heeds the ball to charms. arms

race through the face of a
shitting sun. one. or more, who's
keeping score? sore boards
bored pirate-ships w/ swaying
hips to counterbalance the rocking
& rolling of the waves singing
that old song by queen. bohemian
rap-sodden mean, no, mean, feat, by,
their talk of lye. to fit right in. now go & sin

this is a song (about how I'm a monkey) (Adam, w/ Lars)

"what about, uh, what about a guy w/ an attitude?"
"oh yeah, we got guys like that"
I had problems;
I was arrested for jay-walking in Los Angeles;
I felt, OK, this was this type of character,
in fact
I met people that were just trying to make a living
paradox;
"for thirty years you walk side by side, overnight
lose everything, but not once do you blame
people, so people like yourself can reap the..."
filtered through my own perspective, hate-mail, a story...

"I'm a big fan of close-ups", interested in the human
face, there were some beautiful, like, crane-shots,
I mean, obviously, the greatest location of the human
face, the eyes, the soul of the character,

"I feel it but I don't pay it any mind"

Dick Cheney's Brain (Adam, w/ Lars)

Dick Cheney's brain— it's, a, kneel,
right-male. Spend four days, figuring,
poor, pabulum. Never get the image out
of his mammary. Fox news knocks fuse,
few, fugue, death-mew. Pleasure or
virtue, which would you blues?
Increasingly cloudy morning highs
falling, though. Will satellite beer,
round, mud, schlonger? Respect-
shun was none too wood, board

crisis, moon. The hip-hop revolution
has, taken, plays— ubu boos you. That
doesn't mean the strategy is long
run day one. Holding on to fewer &
fewer trial, investors, wondering.
Serious is set to announce it's big,
also, general, motors. Could be
forced to already analysts push
chapter eleven. Chick, dainty, s'brain—
it promised to back away from that.
Promise making a settlement likely

(don't wanna be nobody's) hero (Lars, w/ Adam)

“should we not have been here before? were
we not here before?” what do you mean
by "here" & "before"? is this a dead
end? & why should that matter, he
asks himself, & the walls, the sun. it
wasn't me who last saw him alive.
i think
it was that man in the checkered suit,
you know who i mean; the one who
always sings the songs nobody
remembers— he sings them well, i'll
give him that. one of them seems to be a
hymn to the rising tide. oh, & while we’re
at it, what do you mean by "been"?
unless i
spelled that wrong & you're
just hungry, not strangely curious
about a dead man who (i think) will
remain where he is…

Debt (Adam, w/ Lars)

"you've got a radical
extension of debt; it
is being noticed; you
can find an excerpt in
hunger here at home

focus on the fact that
he's a dwarf, falling
through the Earth; with
out a written language,
feels shut out"

in the trial, lasting however-
many months, fate in
hands, "they already had
one", it's called theology

hat's a life-span, a
life-style; not the kind
of family (though heavens
may fall) the governments
talk about

they can become show-men,
that's (kind of) what they
do; the job was, "done"

hell in (Adam, w/ Lars)

there's a "she" across
the street
who cooks
butternut squash soup
an "I" & a "he"

One really wonders

Sometimes she's seen
in the window
stroking her pussy

It could jump
out the window
nothing would change

Twenty feet of air
divides "us".

She could be painted
abstractly

I've done it.

Rhythmic brush-strokes
swirling pink
for her pussy

He hung it
he's hung

I hung around
eating her
butternut squash

What kind of
composition is
this?

the love of hopeless cusses (Lars, w/ Adam)

what's there to wonder about? it's all,
very, simple. There's a man across the
street from her, on the floor above, who
employs whores, she's apparently trying to
provoke him into doing something
obscene-- that shouldn't be too hard. What's
there to chunder about? there is, as in
all major cities, a housing shortage, & it's
solved not by those who should & could
solve it, but by those who need to, in any,
way, they can. What's there to blunder
about? enough of this, then. i think i'll go
fondle some imponderable side-streets……

Virtual Pinball (Adam, w/ Lars)

I don't mind you mining
for cheap, Google hits, it's
par, for, the, purse. "just give
me, my chair,
get me out of
my, hair". parse sparse blog-
hogs. leave, a trail of,
hosts— no metaphor.

this ain't no Moulin Rouge. or,
you know how I read, it's cool
w/ me. (I was Di's
favorite waste of time)(I'm
embedding a god-damned
narrative, OK?) "one is over
there, one's over here, it works."

Bertold Brecht,
Nicanor Parra,
Jimmy Page,
Yossarian,
Hans Castorp,
Rumi (abused by translator),
Hmphr Bgrt.

Di's (I've never
seen) right there. We
snuck in her back
door, you can fake
cough— we declare an
era of

virtual (fucking) pinball

body count (Lars, w/ Adam)

count one. one of montechristo. who didn't have the strange hobby
of draping whole islands in plastic, or whatever, cloth. clothing, some
say, should suit the weather. whether the body counts or not, the same some don't say. you don't say. surely madam, you jest. a runaway breast? here, on this street? no wonder all the drivers leaned so heavily on their horns. "sagawa chika". the last light of the day, normally a deep blue, turned green. & then yellow. that's when the birds took flight in a hurry. to beat the red they all thought was next

count two. won't say where, so let's keep with the math. but this is
easy. we're just adding one. one what? oh, i don't know. word. thought.
political assassination. or attempt at. silly monologue. house perched on mountain side. "alejandra pizarnik". there was only one. that's quite enough, thank you & don't forget the fish. you did after all bore it into biting your hook. that was rather impressive. watching mount st helens explode

count three. we appear also to be subtracting one. line, that is. was
it lime we would be hard pressed to make an even half decent "margin-eater". why ever we would want to do that. "joan brossa". there is still so much fun to be made of things. & the finger of god blew off in the storm last fall. maybe, just maybe, there is something we could learn from that

count four. score & more. sure. a pure pleasure. after those 95 minutes
of headless headmasters, witless witnesses & you name it. "philip whalen". barking back at dogs. laughing with happy chinaman after stealing his sack of candy which, he knows, were poems. posted on fence posts (?)

look a tail

today's worst news
run over twice by cops
& the sweet animal rights
activist didn't have
time to save me

there's bound to be a
cat in here somewhere
unbound, hopefully, like
that creature called
"curiosity" pawing around

killing them by the
thousands or that
wisdom they're supposedly
possessed by…….

Today's best news—
a ham & cheese sandwich

Jeffrey Side on "Beams": Galatea Resurrects (2008)

Beams by Adam Fieled is an e-book from Blazevox. It is a multifaceted work that is both formally and typographically inventive, as well as being linguistically intriguing. To do full justice to the poetry in this volume would require a much longer and detailed review of essay length; such is the complexity and multifaceted nature of this work. So all I will attempt in this review is to isolate certain features that can be readily recognised.

Beams comprises four titled sections: 'Beams', 'Apparition Poems', 'Madame Psychoses', and 'Virtual Pinball' (this latter being composed with poet Lars Palm). Each of these sections contain poems stylistically different to those of the other sections. An important aspect to the 'Beams' section is Fieled's poetic aesthetic regarding it. The poems in it represent his concept of the poetic "beam". The following is an extract from his exposition of this poetic, which can be read at http://artrecess2.blogspot.com/2005/08/beam-hypothesis.html:

[A beam is] a short poem, 8-20 lines [not] necessarily impersonal or personal, but it must transcend mere subjectivity […] single lines interspersed function as "beams of light". They're pure shots into poetic space, flashes of imagery, insight, gist-phrasing, etc. Light-beams illuminate built-beams [ie architectural structures], built-beams support and buttress light-beams. Together, they posit the BEAM as a kind of "light-house" or "light-structure".

The manifestation of this poetic aesthetic in the 'Beams' section applies to all of its poems, but other aspects tangentially related also pertain, particularly where colour (light) and matter (objects) are made to amalgamate in such a way as to produce an almost iridescent affect which draws attention to the "variability" that underlies phenomena (according to quantum theory). The aesthetic result is that material objects are seen to display less than palpable qualities: light becomes semi-palpable in 'Creep' (p.7) were it is described as 'Sponge-light', and in 'Leaves' (p.12) matter becomes semi-iridescent:

Leaves tonight are leaning
spots of light […]

The use of such affects serves to give us a sense of the underlying subatomic volatility that forms the objects of the observed world. It has a sort of Blakean sense whereby the visible world is seen to envelop a subtler one. The world is not all it seems to be. In doing this with words, Fieled makes almost tangible to our senses what can but remain only rational inference if we are reliant on same from a study of quantum physics. No small achievement for a poet.

However, the poems are not limited to such affects. They also manage to concisely represent the

vicissitudes of human experience in all their variations. In 'Razor' (p.8) we find lines such as,

edged like needle-scars along arm-veins
everything I can't puncture is there

which in association with the lines,

bottoms grow hardened from rubs
& sharpness be a baby's candy

not only produce an interesting juxtaposition, but also represent birth and death. They suggest the bitterness, regret, and frustration that is the lot of humanity, yet they also suggest hope in that we become hardened in order for that suffering to become almost as acceptable to us as candy is to a baby.

Throughout this collection, a recurring motif relating to sexual struggle is evident. In 'Sex Hex' (p.9) we have a deft account of man's unremitting desire for sexual fulfilment described in almost "biological determinist" terms, yet alluding to the nuances inherent in any discussion of male dominance within a given society, as is suggested by the mention of Foucault:

take her up, stroke her belly
she'll think of Foucault

The biological controlling impulses of the male driven to physical action is counter-balanced by the cerebral passivity of the female who, by thinking of Foucault, both gives in to the male's seduction ploy but also demonstrates an intellectuality that is not evident in the male at this particular moment in their relationship.

The problematical relationship between the sexes is further evinced in terms of consciousness in the 'Madame Psychoses' section. In 'Sarah Israel' (p.33) we see how memory almost reinvents or remodels the past regarding a yearned for "other":

I saw her in a seeing not seen by any eye,
& the "I" that saw, saw my eye not at all.

Here, identity and perception become entwined as the punning of 'eye' with 'I' demonstrates. This punning acts as a poetic device to illustrate the very real inextricable union that identity and

perception must necessarily have. It is a union so binding that the two become mutually exclusive

causing the poet confusion as he struggles to wade his way through something of solipsist maze. In 'Paula' (p.37) we see the ultimate expression of male sexual and emotional yearning that represents the lot of Everyman:

chaos, order, clipped bird-like into
wings & cries. I could only ever
think; paula. all the thrusts &
pumps that could never be. "all"
that must be withheld, & that
it might be better that way.

you gave me the gift; savoring
wanting. how it really was you
I wanted. not a body but a soul.
I tell myself I've "been through
you", forever & never. zero here,
same as two. empty. saturated. dark

I have quoted the entire poem. Such is its universality pertaining to male desire any commentary by me would be more than superfluous. Indeed, it would not be outlandish to suggest that in this poem Fieled has articulated more than John Donne allowed himself to in those poems of Donne's that evince similar concerns.